



(U) 'Dropping Anchor' in Anchorage

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NSA/CSS NORAD/NORTHCOM Alaska Representative (NCNAR)
Run Date: 11/04/2004

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[REDACTED] the NSA Representative in Alaska, works at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage. He describes what life is like in the region... (U//FOUO)

(U) Alaska or "Alyeska" stems from an Aleut word that means "The Great Land," a very appropriate name. The state comprises about 1/5th the territory of the United States, has five times the coastline of the "Lower 48," and prior to the Alaska Territory gaining statehood in 1959, many wanted to create two states -- just so Texas would be the third-largest state. Every day when the tide (second-highest in the world) goes out, Alaska gains more landmass than the state of Texas. A map of Alaska overlaid on the Lower 48 shows extremities spanning from coast to coast -- Ketchikan aligns with Savannah, Anchorage aligns with Kansas City, and Shemya aligns with Los Angeles.

(U) In 1935, aviation pioneer Gen Billy Mitchell testified before Congress that "Alaska is the most central place in the world for aircraft, and that is true either for Europe, Asia, or North America. I believe in the future, that he who holds Alaska will hold the world, and I think it is the most important strategic place in the world." Several cargo carriers already have created hubs at Anchorage's Ted Stevens International Airport for just that reason -- to take advantage of short polar routes to other areas of the world.

(U) Areas such as San Diego and Norfolk can have noticeably good relations with large, nearby military installations, but nowhere is solid military/civilian synergy more manifest than throughout Alaska. Notwithstanding the gold rush, the territory was largely developed by the military, and cementing the foundation was the buy-in from the native Alaskans who first acted as scouts after the Japanese invasion of the Aleutians during WWII. Natives later became members of the National Guard, and today constitute a good share of those positions in the bush ("not serviced by roads"). About one in five Alaskans throughout the state has some affiliation with the military -- that figure becomes about one in three in Anchorage.

(U) Anchorage is located in what is referred to as the "Anchorage Bowl" because of the protection afforded by the Chugach Mts., the Alaska Range, and the warm Japanese Current, which provide the milder climate for Alaska's "banana belt." Rich alluvial soil and long hours of summer sunlight produce world-record flowers and vegetables -- this year's Alaska State Fair featured a 707-lb pumpkin. Temperatures range from the 80s to the minus 30s - but not for protracted periods. I've been colder in 35 degrees in Seattle than in 20 below here. Pick a subject. Sunrise, sunset, Aurora



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Borealis, lakes, mountains, rivers, glaciers, wildlife, quality of life issues, and friendly people -- when someone in a store offers to help, and he doesn't even work there, you know you are in Alaska.

(U) Outdoors takes on a new meaning in Alaska because there is so much of it -- flying in, passengers cross hundreds of miles of uninhabited land. The road system, however is inversely proportionate to the territory with only one major north-south highway, but there are plenty of secondary (unpaved) roads that allow for a lot of driving/RV-ing. There are hundreds of miles of hiking/biking trails, and in the winter even more room without trails. Hunting, fishing, boating, skiing... you name it, Alaska has it.



(U) Is having to ring twice for room service your idea of roughing it? Would you prefer something less strenuous, more genteel? My wife and I attended "St. Matthew's Passion" in English, in its entirety, with two full orchestras, two adult choirs and a children's choir -- a once-in-a-generation, if not lifetime, experience. It was performed in Anchorage, NOT in New York, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Chicago, or Dallas! The arts are well represented here as evidenced by a robust concert season and world-class entertainers who regularly cycle through. Every summer from May through September, Anchorage puts on a Saturday Market that is easily the equivalent of the Sugar Loaf Mountain crafts festival in the DC metropolitan area. Pick a medium... wood, metal, plastic, fur, ivory, gold, papier mache, stone grass, glass baleen, etc. and you can find world-class artisans displaying their wares.

(U) Downside (for some) is remoteness, i.e. the distance from family and friends in the Lower 48. Daylight can exceed 19 ½ hours around the summer solstice, and many newcomers find that disconcerting -- but that's why God invented eyelids. During the winter, there is only about 5 ½ hours of daylight, which can result in seasonal affective disorder (SAD) in some who are susceptible. Nevertheless, full-spectrum lights, light boxes and plenty of activity can counteract those effects.

(U) When we first arrived, locals could identify us as cheechakos ("newcomers") because every time we stepped outside to look at the scenery, we'd say, "Gee..." Sourdoughs ("pioneers") would tell us, "When you've been here awhile, you'll begin to say, 'Just another pretty mountain.'" That hasn't happened yet, and it's not likely to. Even lifelong Alaskans constantly remark, "Did you see the sunrise this morning? Last night the sky was like a large, green dancing curtain." All in all, if you spend any length of time in Alaska, you may love it or hate it, but you are not likely to forget it.

(U//FOUO) Here's an "EXECmessage" about the switch from NCPRA (NSA/CSS Pacific Representative Alaska) to NCNAR:

(U//FOUO) If you are thinking of applying for a field position, see the [Field Vacancy Announcements](#).

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DERIVED FROM: NSA/CSSM 1-52, DATED 08 JAN 2007 DECLASSIFY ON: 20320108